

archivist will be much better equipped with the tools of information management than knowledge of the most recent historiographical trends.

Some may continue to delight in this debate but I find it not only unproductive but also potentially damaging to the archival community. It is dangerous to argue steadfastly that people with particular educational backgrounds will naturally fare better in the profession. Some historians will make good archivists while others will not. The same holds true for information managers. The Master of Archival Studies Programme is a prime example of the need to look beyond dogmatic arguments for one particular background. Although the majority of the students in the programme have a background in history, other fields represented include sociology, classics, and music. Students are judged on the basis of their individual personalities and aptitudes.

Perhaps the intellectual debate over the necessary attributes of archivists ought to be left to the coffee table discussions at the PAC while the rest of the archival community moves on to more pertinent topics which will allow and encourage greater diversity within the profession. We should be able to draw from many professions (including history, records management, librarianship, and computer science) any techniques which will better equip us to keep pace with the ever-changing demands placed on modern archives.

To argue dogmatically that archivists ought to be first and foremost historians is wrong. A debate which focuses on this topic is bound to become divisive. Instead, we should be looking to the needs of the future and searching for some common ground which can be shared by archivists of diverse backgrounds.

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Provenance and the Vancouver Island Project

One of the interests we had when writing "The Vancouver Island Project: Historical Research and Archival Practice" for *Archivaria* 17 was to engage in a dialogue with archivists over issues of importance to researchers and archivists alike. We therefore welcome the initiatives of Terry Cook ("From the Editor," *Archivaria* 17) and Gordon Dodds and Richard Berner ("Letters to the Editor," *Archivaria* 18).

Three points concerning our perspective should be underlined. We are not, as Richard Berner depicts us, attackers laying siege to the archival castle; nor, as Terry Cook says, are we "throwing down the gauntlet to archivists;" and we certainly are not attempting to issue edicts for unthinking archivists to implement, which, if that were the case, should indeed, as Gordon Dodds puts it, "grate a little." Rather we are exploring ways to improve both aspects of archival practice and research possibilities for historians, sociologists, political scientists,

public planners, geographers, neighbourhood groups, and heritage planners. If this is a “conceit,” it is one of a different sort than that mentioned by Gordon Dodds.

We have found through this endeavour, and through our ongoing work with the Project, that discussing issues of central importance across disciplinary or professional boundaries is an activity which demands a sensitive antenna. At times, as Gordon Dodds points out, our antennae missed important nuances in language usage. For that we apologize.

We do not apologize for allegedly missing Kent Haworth’s “advocacy of local institutional and organizational responsibility” (Dodds p. 5) — because we did not miss it (p. 179). Nor is this a straw issue — as Richard Berner’s traditional, if not time-worn, arguments in favour of centralization attest (p. 7). Since the nature of our concern with provenance is the central issue of the published responses to our article, that concern bears restating.

Our reading of archival literature, our experience working in archives, and our involvement with the Vancouver Island Project, have given us healthy respect for the importance of provenance. As we explained in our article, and as Dodds recognized, our Project integrates “provenance and subject access without diminishing the former principle.” Provenance forms the “context” (Dodds, p. 6) of our paper because of the burden that archivists have placed on it primarily as an administrative tool. That perspective, we argue, must change if archivists are to meet the emerging needs of an information-based society. In that sense we are in sympathy with Richard Berner when he asserts that “provenance . . . has so rarely been fully employed to extract the information that is inherent in provenancially given data.” (Berner, p. 8) Unfortunately, inferentially based access dominates provenancially organized archives. We think, as now do many archivists, that this is insufficient. And in that context we are exploring how modern technology can provide new approaches for access.

What it boils down to, then, is, as Terry Cook points out, a matter of “priorities.” As “researchers” we believe more emphasis must be put on the problem of access — this is not to abandon provenance, nor is it to be circumscribed by its traditional usage.

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Court Records in Saskatchewan

Professor Knafla’s article, “‘Be It Remembered’: Court Records and Research in the Canadian Provinces,” which appeared in *Archivaria* 18, contains a statement about the amount of court records in Saskatchewan which is misleading and requires some clarification. On pages 111-12 he says:

The survival of court records in the two prairie provinces created in 1905 was more chequered. In Saskatchewan the great bulk of